

A

Dissertation on

Menstruation

Read March 25th 1826

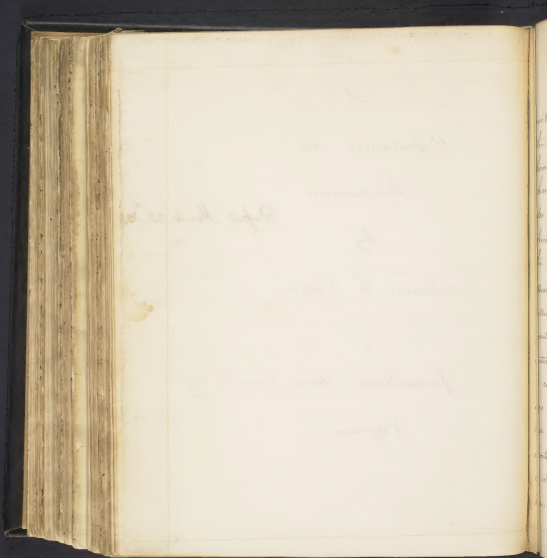
by

Thomas C. Crerten

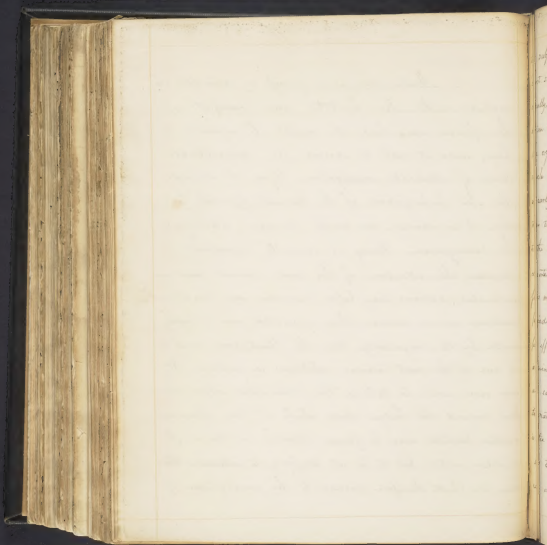
of

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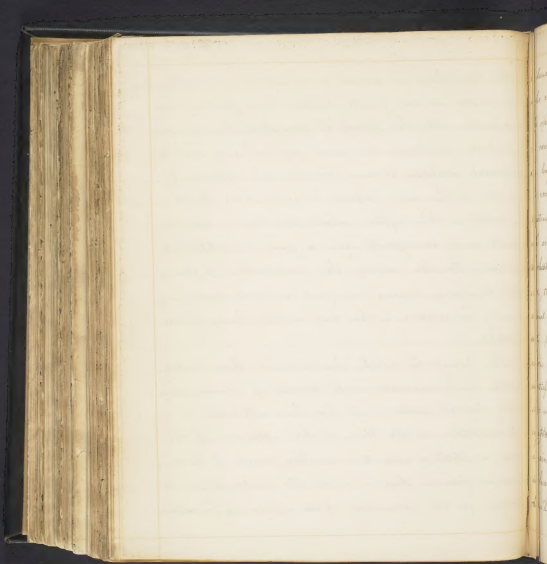
Menstruation is a process so intimately connected with the health and comfort of the fairer sex, that it would be injustice to them, were it not to receive its proportionate share of Medical investigation. Upon it depends also the propagation of the human species; for when it is wanting or much deranged, sterility is the consequence. Being so evidently important, it attracted the attention of the most ancient and uncultivated nations, long before medicine was taught or practised as a science. Their superstition was so highly excited by its singularity, that the fluid was said to be one of the most noxious substances in nature. It was even said to destroy the caterpillar, when spiders had around the hedges upon which it fed. Many such omitted properties may be found detailed in the works of older writers; but it is not necessary to introduce them here. We shall therefore proceed to the investigation of



the subject under its present state of advancement.
That sanguineous fluid thrown off from the uterus periodically, is called menses, from its appearing regularly at an interval of from 21 to 30 days, or a lunar month. The age at which this discharge appears, varies very much in different countries. In some it commences as early as the ninth or tenth year; in others not sooner than the nineteenth or twentieth. This difference is owing to the difference of climate; for we find in all hot climates that menstruation commences much sooner; flows more copiously, and ceases at a much earlier period than in cold climates. Heat has a very powerful effect in relaxing the solids of the human body, as is evinced by the copious perspiration taking place in all cases, where the body in health, is heated above its natural temperature. Not in this secretion alone, is the effects of heat apparent, but in many others. In temperate climates menstruation usually commences about the age of fourteen or fifteen; and about

At this time there are evident signs of an approaching revolution in the female system. Every part or organ connected with the process of generation, becomes more perfectly developed. The mind sympathizing with this corporal revolution becomes stronger, and disposed to yield to the new propensities brought about by the revolution. The system about this time is very irritable and consequently there is great susceptibility to disease. On the contrary, the predisposition to some of the hereditary diseases, is in part or totally done away; owing we suppose to the two actions being incompatible.

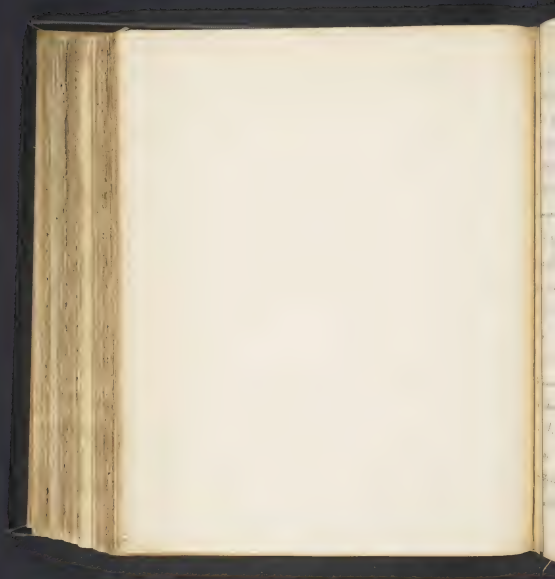
The process by which the Menstrual fluid is elaborated, has occasioned much diversity of opinion among physiological writers. It has been attributed to a fermentation in the blood, to the influence of the sun, to plethora and to a secretory process of the uterus. As we presume there is no one who would, at present contend for the production of the menses by fermentation



or lunar influence, we deem it useless to make any remarks on them.

The opinion that a general or local Plethora was the sole cause of the catamenia, was entertained for a considerable length of time; and is even now advocated by some. In corroboration of the hypothesis it is said, "that during menstruation, the symptoms are evidently those of Plethora, such as anxiety, oppression and a sense of weight about the chest, flushings of the face, Headache &c. Again, it is said, that the female of the human species, is the only animal subject to this discharge; this is attributed to the erect position of the female; thus favouring the determination of the blood downwards. This, however, is a most unsatisfactory way of getting over a difficulty.

Now we would ask; if Plethora produced the above symptoms, why will not direct depletion, by opening a vein, remove them? Or why do not those vicarious discharges which frequently happen, put a stop to them? But we find that these only palliate the symp.





hardly any secret function. It is a fact
of the nature of the secretory function.
The uterus is exceedingly vascular and the
injection of the blood vessels is such that the
considerable vascularity in its surface, seen in the
last place, is the greater capacity of the uterus
of the secretory function. In the last place, the
arteries are distributed over the uterus. The rest of
the arteries are also thicker than those of the veins.
The uterine structure of the uterus is similar to that
of other glands.

As there are objections brought forth by the advocates of
the other doctrine, we don't wish to mention them
but we may endeavor to eliminate them.

1st We are told that the uterus is not sufficiently
granular for the purpose of secretion of blood.
We urge this objection must, for a moment, reflect
on the various secretory surfaces of the body, the
mucous, serous, and cutaneous surfaces, and then we
shall, without any further evidence, abandon it.



is singularly honest. He does not allow himself
to go into any of the questions which are to be
considered, but rather restricts himself to
the one point of a contest of skill, and then
allows it to pass. He does not even mention the
name of argument, and does not even mention
the name of logic, as not competent in the office of
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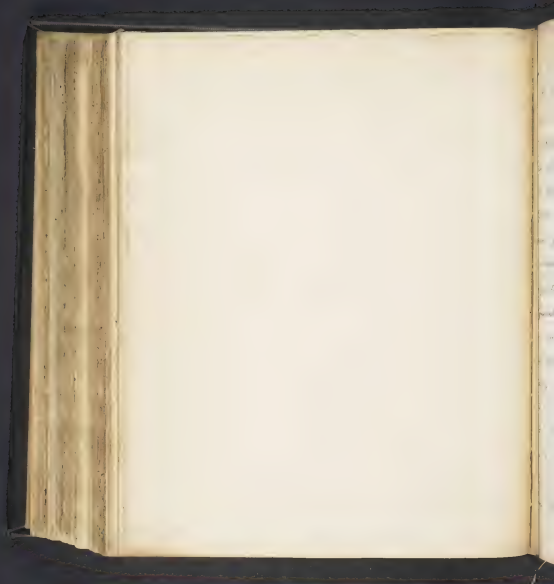


and at the same time has a more violent
 growth - the constant repetition of our visit to
 the monument & the effect of getting out into
 the open air, when the fluid is made to circulate & a
 "stimulus" is given to the system - the
 "positive" effect is sometimes so felt, even when it
 has been so pronounced by others in visiting the
 monument & the children are quick to feel it; we
 make no other visit, as it is not the case with some
 who visit the monument & then go to the
 tomb of the "Ancestress" & so on. The memory of the
 visit to the "Ancestress" is so strong, that we have
 often the "Ancestress" in our mind when we
 are at the monument; and we have often the
 "Ancestress" in our mind when we are at the
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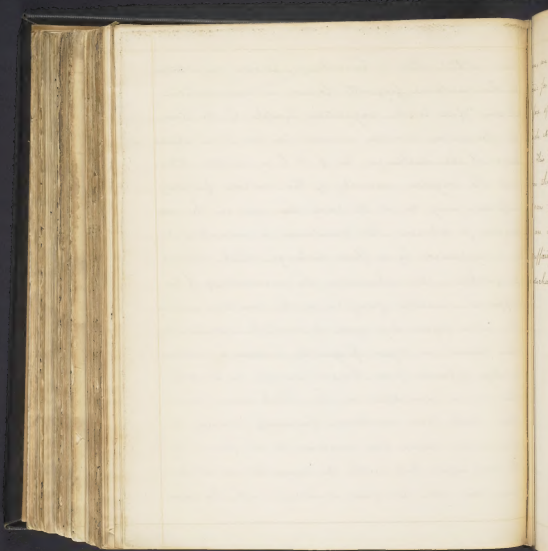
further of the different kinds to be set as it
 reaches, a further place to give the
 discharges to be performed. It is true there is
 occasionally a discharge from the case of pneumonia
 being necessary, but what good is there that this is.



[illegible]



and establish that of hemorrhage, he calls our attention to the membrane frequently formed in dysmenorrhoea. He says, "If it be the coagulating lymph of the blood, its formation readily accounts for the fluid appearance of the discharge; but if it be a secretion, it presents the singular anomaly of two secretions essentially different, going on at the same time and in the same organ: for whenever this membrane is evacuated, it is accompanied by a fluid discharge which will not coagulate." We acknowledge the inconsistency of two different secretions going on at the same time and in the same organ, but again it must be admitted, that when diseased, an organ frequently produces a substance totally different from that it produces in health. This we see exemplified in the black vomit, and those dark, fetid discharges frequently occurring in fevers. We believe this membrane to be formed by the same vessels that secrete the menses, but not at the same time. As to the fluid discharged with the mem-



brane, we believe it to be the true material of Menstruation: for this membrane is attached to the whole inner surface of the uterus, and so soon as that action, by which it is formed, ceases, healthy menstruation commences. This healthy fluid has first to detach the membrane from the uterus (which it does at different points) before it can find its way out; consequently there must be an accumulation of it. When this accumulation is sufficient to detach the whole of it, the membrane is discharged with the menstrual fluid following.

For Dr. Dewees

